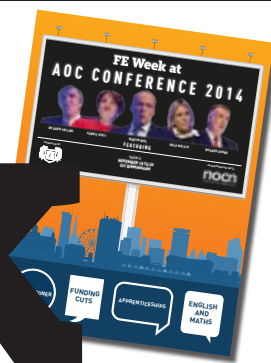


FE Week



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From left: Lisbeth Tucker, vet and tutor, Louise Clapham, animal care technician, Zaeed Mohammed, animal care tutor, Sue Jamieson, animal care tutor, Claire Harris, animal care technician, and Mhairi Helme, vet and tutor Above: Bonzo's x-ray

Right: Bonzo

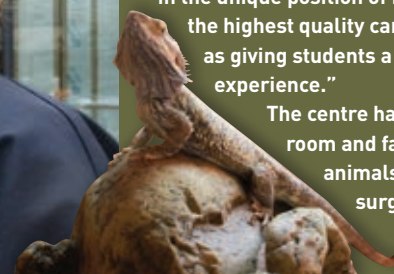
BRAVE BONZO

By Rebecca Jones

Kendal College has opened an animal rescue and rehabilitation centre staffed by tutors and learners — and one of the first patients was Bonzo the bearded dragon lizard, who came in for an X-ray.

Experienced vets run the centre and teach level two animal care and level three animal management learners who also work there. Lisbeth Tucker, resident vet and tutor at the Cumbria college, said: "Kendal now finds itself in the unique position of being able to provide the highest quality care to wildlife, as well as giving students a practical animal care experience."

The centre has an intensive care room and facilities to house animals referred by veterinary surgeries, the RSPCA and other charities.



£142M CONTRACTOR TOP-SLICING 'EXTORTIONATE' 40 PC

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The country's biggest Skills Funding Agency (SFA) contractor is charging management fees up to an "extortionate" 40 per cent of contract values, it has been revealed.

Learndirect, with a current allocation of £142m and 70 subcontractors including colleges, charities and independent learning providers, was easily the biggest SFA provider this year — and lists the range of fees it charges subcontractors on its website.

A spokesperson for Learndirect, a formerly public-owned company that reportedly made a gross profit last year of just over £22m, told *FE Week* its fees included central services such as IT and marketing along with performance monitoring, and often fell short of the 40 per cent maximum.

The SFA has, since August last year, required providers to list the range of

management fees they charge when taking on subcontractors. And since Monday last week (November 24) the SFA has also required providers to specify what they charged each subcontractor last academic year. Learndirect failed to meet the new duty, but the 40 per cent top-slice was declared in its range of fees.

"As this is the first year of this requirement we have had to introduce new systems and complete checks to ensure the information is displayed in line with the policy. While it's yet not available it will be within the next two weeks," said the Learndirect spokesperson.

However, HIT Training, which had the fifth largest SFA allocation with £25m did meet the new duty and did publish specific details of its management fees to its 15 subcontractors, which reached 15 per cent. Operations director Sara Goldie said: "We are keen to ensure our subcontractors don't experience the extortionate service charges that HIT experienced in the early days when some

primes were charging as much as 40 per cent."

It comes after an Ofsted survey of subcontractors in 2012 uncovered fees of more than 15 per cent — overcharging according to SFA guidance. An SFA spokesperson would not comment on the size of individual providers' fees or their compliance with the publication duties, but said a "programme of compliance work to check that actual supply chain fees and charges for 2013/14 have been published" would begin soon.

Newcastle College Group (NCG) and Leeds City College were also in the top five biggest SFA contractors. NCG, which has a current allocation of £34m, met the new duty and charges up to just over 20 per cent, but Leeds City College, with an allocation of £26m didn't. It charges up to 30 per cent in fees according to its published range of fees.

A Leeds City College spokesperson said: "The college is awaiting its final reconciliation statement from the SFA. As one of the UK's

largest colleges, this can be a larger task than it is for smaller general FE colleges. Once the ILR is finalised the college will publish its subcontractor data."

Babcock Training, which has a current allocation of £27m and 35 subcontractors made up mostly of colleges and a few charities, was also among the top five SFA contractors, but did not meet either duty. It claimed it did not need to under SFA rules because it did not subcontract entire programmes.

A spokesperson said: "Babcock self-delivers all programmes as far as possible and has no learners entirely subcontracted. In a small number of cases we subcontract part of a programme to a specialist provider or a college."

NCG declined to comment on its fees. Leeds City College was unavailable for comment on its fees.

See editor's comment on page 6



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NEWS

WEYMOUTH PRINCIPAL SUSPENDED AMID FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

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Weymouth College principal Liz Myles has been suspended — around six months after FE Commissioner Dr David Collins identified “significant weaknesses” in leadership.

The reason for the suspension has not been disclosed.

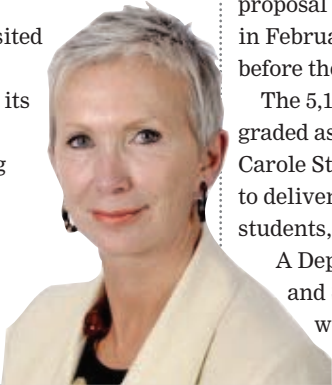
Ms Myles (pictured), an Ofsted associate inspector of more than 20 years, took up the principal post two years ago.

A statement issued by the 7,000-learner college said: “We have no further comment other than to confirm that Liz Myles has been suspended from her post, pending an investigation.

“To ensure we maintain the integrity of the investigation, no further information can be provided at this time.”

The college was inspected by the education watchdog in June last year and recorded its second consecutive grade three result, with leadership and management as good — it even singled out Ms Myles for her “good leadership”.

However, Dr Collins visited in March after the Skills Funding Agency assessed its finances as inadequate and recommended, among other things, that “the principal should engage a ‘peer mentor’ with a good financial track record to assist her in dealing with the college’s present



financial situation”.

Then-Skills Minister Matthew Hancock, who told the college that Dr Collins had “identified significant weaknesses in the capacity and capability of the existing governance and leadership,” demanded “robust action that will deliver financial recovery”.

Meanwhile Norton Radstock College has announced plans to merge with City of Bath College.

Norton Radstock was visited in August by Dr Collins, who said the 4,700-learner college — rated by Ofsted last year as inadequate, including for leadership and management — needed to operate “within a larger partnership”.

Henry Logan, acting principal at Norton Radstock from this month (December), said: “I believe this is a positive outcome for the college, its staff and students. It will bring financial security and secure FE for the district.”

The two colleges, which are nearly 10 miles apart, are due to present the final merger proposal to the City of Bath governing body in February, with formal merger expected before the summer.

The 5,129-learner City of Bath College was graded as good by Ofsted last year. Its chair, Carole Stott MBE, said: “We are well placed to deliver a local solution to meet the needs of students, employers and communities.”

A Department for Business, Innovation and Skills spokesperson said Dr Collins would return to Norton Radstock after the merger to review progress.

MPs hear of ‘cluster’ solution to apprenticeships

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Colleges should form closer ties with schools to encourage more young people into apprenticeships, Ofsted FE and skills director Lorna Fitzjohn has told MPs.

She gave evidence on Wednesday (November 26) to the Education Select Committee in Portcullis House, Westminster, that focused on how the number and quality of apprenticeships for 16 to 19-year-olds could be improved.

She said poor careers advice at schools, which tended to encourage learners to take A-levels and higher education degrees, was one of the main reasons that apprenticeship starts in the age group had “flatlined”.

She said colleges could do more to help schools see the benefits of vocational training and offer students an alternative to traditional academic routes through developing closer working ties.

She suggested “clustering schools and colleges together so that you haven’t got that at 14 or 16 where you go up one route and thereby you stay [away] from the other route”.

“If you bring a variety of establishments together... young people can perhaps even carry out a combined programme and move between organisations,” she said.

“You see those systems in Switzerland and Germany and it’s maybe something we ought to have here.”

Her comments reflected the suggestion made late last month by Ofsted chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw in a speech to the Confederation of British Industry, in Coventry, where he said schools and colleges would benefit from forming local “clusters”.

Ms Fitzjohn also told MPs that local enterprise partnerships were “beginning” to play a more proactive role in co-ordinating apprenticeships.

But, she said: “I don’t think they are as interested necessarily in the lower level aspects of the workforce. They haven’t always been involved in FE and skills.”

Ms Fitzjohn commented on plans announced two weeks ago by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg to launch a UCas-style “fully-comprehensive national database” of post-16 skills and employer led-courses and opportunities in England from September.

She said: “I think it will help but apprentices look for apprenticeships locally because they are more likely to need family support.”

UCas chief executive Mary Curnock Cook responded to Mr Clegg’s announcement by pointing out that UCas Progress, its service for post-16 choices, had already expanded to

FE WEEK NEWS IN BRIEF

Learner nominations
Nominations have opened for the Adult Learners’ Week (ALW) Awards 2015.

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Niace) has called for nominations for individual adult learners, tutors, projects and employers who have shown exceptional dedication to adult education.

The deadline is 5pm on Wednesday, December 17, and winners will be announced during next year’s ALW, which is run by Niace and take place June 13 to 19.

Visit www.alw.org.uk/nominations to nominate.

Progress at G4S
Security contractor G4S Care & Justice Services has made “reasonable” progress in all areas of Ofsted monitoring since receiving an inadequate rating in September last year.

The employer provider, which has 184 apprentices, was improving assessment, learner monitoring, English and maths provision, self-assessment and success rates, according to a third monitoring visit report, published on November 25.

A G4S spokesperson said vocational training programmes could be “challenging to implement” but said it was “committed” to further improvement.

New validation rules
The Skills Funding Agency has added new validation rules for R04 and warned they may cause some data that previously passed validation to be rejected by the Hub.

For R04, the agency will apply rule changes introduced on October 4 and November 19, which can be found on the validation rules spreadsheet on the agency website.

The agency warned Code LDM323 would not be valid for traineeships that started on or after August 1.

Email servicedesk@sfa.bis.gov.uk for further information.



offer “national coverage of vocational and academic courses in England and Wales”.

And when pressed after the hearing on whether she thought a UCas-style system could work for apprenticeships, Ms Fitzjohn said: “UCas would need to run a more local-based system than it does for universities.”

Head of skills and policy campaigns at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, Katerina Rudiger, said there was a “real issue where schools... see apprentices as something for people who don’t succeed”.

She added: “If young people don’t know about apprenticeships and don’t know how to apply for them, then obviously we won’t be making any progress.”

Education Secretary Nicky Morgan is due to give evidence at the committee next meeting, on Wednesday (December 3), focussing on exams for 15 to 19-year-olds in England.

AELP concerns over Labour's apprenticeship policy

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The Labour Party has been urged by the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) to scrap its policy that apprenticeships should start from at least level three and last a minimum of two years.

Labour claims the move would improve the apprenticeship "brand", but the AELP said the changes would stop employers taking on an apprentice where they only had level two positions available.

An AELP spokesperson said: "We would have a number of concerns if the opposition persisted with this policy. An apprenticeship is a proper job with training.

"All apprentices are employed and many employers only have an entry-level job available and they therefore offer a level two programme to an apprentice. Many employers will not have a level three job available for job entrants as in many sectors this would involve supervisory work.

"If the programme has to be



level three, then employers will offer very few opportunities for young people and we would see a substantial increase in the numbers that remain unemployed."

The policy was unveiled in September last year by Labour's Skills Taskforce. Its report, A revolution in apprenticeships: a something-for-something deal with employers, said: "To protect the apprenticeship brand, level two training should be renamed as a traineeship or similar."

It proposed that apprenticeships be level three or above and last a minimum of two years for level three (equivalent to A-level) and three years for level four (university level).

The report went on to say: "However, given that two-thirds of all apprenticeships in England are now at level two, these measures would inevitably lead to a dramatic fall in apprenticeship numbers if introduced suddenly.

"Employers and providers should therefore be given time to improve the quality of their apprenticeships over an agreed period. It is also vital that young people achieving at level two

are able to progress to higher levels, so level two apprenticeships should be redesigned, as well as renamed, to ensure courses provide a platform for progression to a level three apprenticeship."

However, the AELP spokesperson said: "Traineeships are for young people who are unemployed and Labour would be cutting off the real employment opportunities that level two apprenticeships give.

"We do however support the view that many more of our young people who achieve a level two should be given the opportunity to progress to level three."

The AELP's comments come after Shadow Education Secretary Tristram Hunt (pictured) re-emphasised his commitment to the policy in his address at the Association of Colleges annual conference in Birmingham.

He said: "It cannot be right that one label covers everything from a short-course level one up to what amounts to a vocational PhD, and I would argue that it is this elasticity which is allowing the government to get away with the grade-inflating numbers game which sees short-term employee training re-badged as an apprenticeship."

Chief exec redundant with end of federation

The chief executive of a two-college federation has been told his position has been made "redundant" with the break-up of the organisation after just over 12 months.

Mike Hopkins stepped down as principal of Middlesbrough College to become chief executive of the newly-formed federation of Middlesbrough and Gateshead colleges in September last year.

However, two months ago the board agreed to disband the organisation.

In a joint statement Gateshead chair Robin Mackie and Middlesbrough chair Bob Brady said: "Following the decision to dissolve the federation, the position of chief executive is now redundant and Mike Hopkins has been released from his contract.

"We recognise Mike's contribution in developing and launching the federation and wish him every success in the future."

Mr Hopkins will also step down from his role as chair of the Principals' Professional Council (PPC) this month (December).

Nick Lewis, PPC general secretary, said: "PPC has been very fortunate to have benefited from Mike's energy and his experience of FE and we wish him the best for the future."

Mr Hopkins was not available to comment.

'No excuses' as Ofsted sees lack of progress in grade four recovery

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The principal of a troubled London college has conceded there were "no excuses" for the poor results in an Ofsted monitoring report that found insufficient progress had been made in its efforts to bounce back from an inadequate grading.

The Ofsted monitoring visit found Lewisham and Southwark College, which late last month had ministerial permission to rename from Lesoco, had made "insufficient progress" in each of the areas looked at.

The areas were improving teaching and learning, learner attendance, tutorial arrangements, teaching support and maths and English provision.

It was Ofsted's fourth return to the college since the initial inspection in November last year.

On previous monitoring visits inspectors noted the college had made "reasonable progress" with maths and English but had struggled elsewhere. And the latest report said improvements had "slowed".

Interim principal Ioan Morgan (pictured): "No excuses, this is not good enough. We will have the college in better shape for its new principal and on a much more secure financial footing. The bottom line, however, is that this is a long haul recovery.

"Impact from our new systems will be seen in improved learner performance in this academic year when new data is available resulting from improved teaching and learning."

FE Commissioner David Collins visited the college in late January and a spokesperson for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills



(BIS) said he "identified some weaknesses in the governance and leadership of the college".

Then-principal Maxine Room later stepped down and was replaced by Mr Morgan and a revisit to the college by the commissioner in July resulted in praise for the new leadership.

However, a BIS spokesperson told *FE Week*: "The commissioner and his advisers continue to monitor and review progress at the college and are challenging the governing body and senior executive to take action to increase the pace and quality of improvement.

"The commissioner is set to conduct a stocktake assessment of the college in early 2015 to formally review progress against his recommendations, advising Ministers and the chief executive of the funding agencies on progress. If there has been insufficient progress, further action will be taken."

Ofsted monitoring visits occur around every three months after an inadequate inspection result, until the full re-inspection, which takes place around 15 months after the initial inspection.

The college was formed by a merger between Lewisham College and Southwark College in 2012 and was rebranded as Lesoco in 2013 at a cost of £290,000, as exclusively revealed by *FE Week* two months ago.

And Skills Minister Nick Boles has now given the college permission to ditch Lesoco and officially call itself Lewisham and Southwark College.

Mr Morgan said: "We are very pleased that common sense has prevailed."

He added the name change would "enable us to get on with the important work that lies ahead with the assurance that we will still be recognised as the local college serving the two boroughs and surrounding parts of London".

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Flexibility plea after apprenticeships fall

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Greater contracting flexibility at the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) could help reverse the continued decline in all-age apprenticeship starts, the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) has claimed.

All-age apprenticeship starts were at 440,400 last academic year, down 13.7 per cent, having been at 510,200 the previous year, and 520,600 in 2011/12.

The 2012/13 fall in all-age apprenticeship starts was the first since 2005/06 when the figure of 175,000 was down 7.5 per cent from the previous year.

Within the fall in the 2013/14 figures, were decreases from 165,400 to 159,100 (-3.8 per cent) for the 19 to 24 age group and 230,300 to 161,600 (-29.8 per cent) among those aged 25+.

Stewart Segal, AELP chief executive (pictured), said: "To reverse the decrease for 19 to 24 we need a greater level of government investment and more flexible approach to contracting, which in turn would encourage providers themselves to invest in more capacity."

He added: "The disappointing fall in 25+ starts is in our view down to both the impact of loans and the SFA putting pressure on providers to reduce starts for this age group."

An AELP spokesperson said employers often lost interest in taking

on apprentices, or their budget priorities changed, before the SFA reached a decision on whether to approve for apprenticeship growth requests.

A joint statement from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the SFA read: "We are reforming the funding of all apprenticeships to put employers in the driving seat and ensure apprenticeships deliver the skills businesses need to grow and compete."

Nevertheless, the final (rather than provisional) figures for apprenticeships, published on Wednesday (November 26) in the Statistical First Release (SFR), also showed that 16 to 18 starts were continuing to recover and were up on 2012/13, from 114,500 to 119,800 (4.6 per cent).

However, the report stated that the number of traineeship starts for 2013/14 was just 10,400.

Teresa Frith, senior skills policy manager for the Association of Colleges, described the traineeship numbers as "disappointing" but said the 16 to 18 increase was "positive".

She added that the fall in older apprentice numbers "could be caused by indecision regarding changes to the



system including the way it's funded".

A spokesperson for the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Niace) claimed that the introduction last April of 24+ advanced learning loans had contributed to the "dramatic fall" in adult learners as revealed in the SFR, which showed the number of 25-plus learners at levels three and four fell 27.9 per cent to 289,500.

The claim was backed with figures, published by BIS on Thursday (November 27), that showed there had been 4,930 loan applications during October — 7 per cent down on the same month last year.

The figures also showed there had been 47,480 applications for the current academic year by the end of October — 10 per cent down on 2013/14.

David Hughes, chief executive of Niace, said: "There needs to be urgent action from the government to address this serious decline and we call on them to delay, indefinitely, any plans to extend loans."

A BIS spokesperson conceded that 24+ advanced learning loans had hit adult apprenticeship starts.

"But as soon as it became clear that loans were not the preferred route for employers or prospective apprentices we decided to remove apprenticeships from the loans programme," she said.

"As such we look forward to seeing this trend reverse in future and a boost to the number of adult apprentices."

Council dishes out £2m loan to 'safeguard' college

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An East London council has given out a £2m loan to "help safeguard" the future of its local college.

Newham Council cabinet approved the cash for Newham College of Further Education, which it said had been put in an "extremely difficult position" by government cuts.

The college described the council's support, agreed at a meeting on Thursday, November 20, as "invaluable". The loan will be repayable over two years at an unspecified "commercial" rate.

Newham councillor Lester Hudson, cabinet member for finance, regeneration and planning, said: "Newham College has been placed in an extremely difficult situation by Government cuts to its funding, which has seen almost £5m cut from its budget."

He added: "As a council we want to ensure that changes to funding for FE do not harm our education establishments and that they can continue to meet the needs of the borough's young people."

"This is why the council's cabinet approved a loan of £2m to help safeguard the college's future."

He said the loan would "ensure the college can aid in the skills development of the borough's young people and adults, as well as supporting the council's aim to provide tailored programmes to help people into work".

Principal issues 'think of learners' plea over strike plans

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The principal of Lambeth College has pleaded with University and College Union (UCU) members to step back from "damaging and destructive" strike action after they voted in favour of a second indefinite strike in just eight months.

Mark Silverman also called on government and local politicians to encourage unions to focus their efforts on the negotiating table, rather than go ahead with a series of planned strikes beginning this week.

He said it was "disappointing that UCU aren't thinking about the learners and the impact it's going to have on them".

The UCU unveiled plans on November 26 for a series of escalating one, two and three-day walkouts, culminating in indefinite strike from January 17, in a row over contracts for new staff which the union says would leave teachers with longer working hours and less annual leave and sick pay.

Mr Silverman said: "I would welcome anybody who has any influence with UCU to encourage them step back from something that's going to be so damaging and destructive, and to understand what that industrial action is going to do to learners and to the college."

If the strike goes ahead it will be the second time UCU members at the college have taken indefinite action in eight months, following a strike from June that lasted five weeks.

Staff returned days before the summer holidays began and have been involved in



Striking UCU members on the picket line during the five-week strike which began in June

were "in line with sector norms".

He said they were part of the college's recovery plan following a grade three Ofsted inspection in March 2013 (up from a grade four in October 2012) and financial deficits of £4.1m in 2012/13 and £3.5m last year.

"We've made great progress, we have really increased our success rates, but clearly the damaging action and the end of last year has dented that progress," said Mr Silverman.

"UCU needs to understand the reality of the challenges we face."

The first strike is expected to take place on Thursday (December 4) for one day, followed by a two-day strike on December 9 and 10 and a three-day strike is scheduled for December 15, 16 and 17.

Following Christmas, a two-day strike is planned on January 7 and 8, with three days of striking on January 13, 14 and 15 before the indefinite strike is set to begin on January 17.

Una O'Brien, UCU regional official, said: "The situation at Lambeth College is now very clear and the management cannot be in any doubt at how angry staff are about the new contracts."

"We hope that strike action, which will certainly mean major disruption again at Lambeth, won't be necessary. The college needs to sit down with us to talk through changes to staff contracts and work towards finding a solution staff are happy with."

The new contracts at the centre of the row were introduced for new staff on April 1 and offer 50 days a year annual leave — 10 days fewer than that given to existing staff.

However, Mr Silverman has said the terms

Around 60 per cent of the college's 20,750 students are Newham residents.

Principal Di Gowland said: "The council's support is invaluable given the level of cuts throughout the FE sector and the impact these will have on the Newham community."

The loan proposal was initially put to a full council meeting on September 29 as part of the Mid-Year Review of the 2014/15 Budget and Overall Financial Position. A ruling was then delegated to the cabinet.

Ms Gowland said: "The borough has one of the most diverse populations in the country and the wide range of education and training offered by Newham College is giving our residents the skills they need to boost the borough's economy."

"This short term loan will ensure we are positively engaged in developing and delivering the training needed to support the local skills and employment agenda."

An Association of Colleges (AoC) spokesperson said: "There have been many loans, grants and in-kind contributions from councils to colleges over the last 20 years, which reflects their joint work in meeting community need and fostering local economic growth."

However, she said AoC was unable to give specific examples of such agreements and could not offer advice on seeking local authority loans.

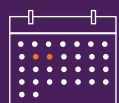
Has your college received a local authority loan? Is it something you would consider?
FE Week is keen to hear about your experiences. Email news@feweek.co.uk



FE Week Annual Apprenticeship Conference and Exhibition 2015

Supporting apprenticeship providers during a time of major reform

DATE:



March 9 to 10, 2015

VENUE:



Venue: Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Westminster, London

Confirmed Speakers



Jennifer Coupland

Deputy Director, Joint Apprenticeships Unit, Department for business, Innovation and Skills/DFE



Nick Linford

Director of LSECT Ltd, former editor of FE Week



Sue Husband

Director of the National Apprenticeship Service

More speakers to be announced

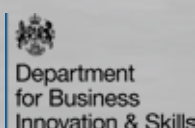
The FE Week Annual Apprenticeship Conference and exhibition 2015 (AAC2015) will provide an unprecedented opportunity for those involved with the delivery of apprenticeships to come together to learn, share and debate during a time of major reform and on the eve of a General Election.

Taking place on the first two days of National Apprenticeship Week (March 9 to 10, 2015) and in partnership with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the conference will offer a mixture of key note speeches from Government Ministers and Shadow Cabinet members, to in-depth practical sessions with Nick Linford and other technical specialists.

This is a not to be missed two-day policy and practice conference.

For more information and to register visit **feweekaac2015.co.uk**

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FE WEEK COMMENT

The nasty taste of the top-slice

When the Skills Funding Agency said early last year that it would be making providers go public with 'management fee' details, this newspaper welcomed the move.

The agency was right to introduce rules to bring in transparency over multi-million pound subcontracting top-slices.

We had previously reported how the average 'management fee' looked to be 23 per cent. And that seems reasonable compared to the 40 per cent fee that Learndirect charges, as it revealed in compliance with just part of the new rules.

But exactly what it charged which subcontractors we can't tell because Learndirect hasn't fully complied. No, we can't yet tell how much of its £153m agency allocation last academic year Learndirect top-sliced.

These 'management fees' represent public money being withheld from the provider working with learners. Every single penny withheld should be identified and justified, publicly.

The transparency rules go some way to ensuring this accountability and to not meet them must bring punishment that makes compliance the more attractive option.

And so we find ourselves with the deadline for meeting these rules having passed. The agency must act. No grey area, no excuses.

Chris Henwood
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TOP UKCES REPORT TWEETS PAGE 9

- @E_T_Foundation
Good to see @UKCES launch Growth through People. We're helping by building the prof capacity of the E&T workforce to grow higher level VET
- @NIACEhq
Today's important report from @UKCES reinforces our point that the current skills system is not fit for purpose and needs radical change
- @SkillsetSSC
#Skills + #talent are key, both individually + to the economy as a whole. What's the plan for 2015? #GrowthThroughPeople @ukces
- @kevingreenrec
Great to see @CBItweets @TUCnews & @ukces all calling for business's to invest more in skills. UK jobs market in desperate need
- @Cheese_Peter
Great report launch today @ukces #GrowthThroughPeople linking big themes from edu to work, VE, skills, productivity & outcome measures



Finanacial problems 'typical' says principal ordered to improve

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The principal of a financially-troubled sixth form college ordered by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) to improve has hit out over government cuts to the FE and skills sector.

David Vasse, principal of John Leggott College, in Scunthorpe, which was handed a financial notice to improve last month, told *FE Week* his college's situation was "typical" and the result of "vastly reduced funding".

The college was issued with the notice after its 2014/15 finances were rated "inadequate" by the EFA for the second year in a row.

"The college's situation is typical of many colleges in the country with less than good financial health; funding per 16 to 19-year-old is vastly reduced compared to funding for other age groups and yet the costs of providing pre-university teaching, support, guidance and welfare services is increasing each year," said Mr Vasse.

He said the college had "success rates much

higher than sector averages" despite receiving "one of the lowest rates of funding per learner of any educational establishment in North Lincolnshire".

Mr Vasse also pointed out that unlike schools and academies, sixth form colleges were not exempt from VAT. "Sixth form colleges across the country are pushing hard to address this inequality," he said.

The 1,767-learner college will now have to prepare and submit a financial recovery plan to the EFA by December 7. The notice to improve came around six months after Ofsted rated the college, including its leadership, as good, in a situation similar to that of cash-strapped Bournville College, as reported in the last edition of *FE Week*.

FE commissioner Dr David Collins identified a "critical cash position" at the 15,000-learner Birmingham college in August after the Skills Funding Agency issued a notice of financial concern in April. He said Ofsted, which rated the college as good with outstanding leadership in May, could be "more useful" with regard college finances.

An Ofsted spokesperson said: "As set out in the FE and Skills Inspection Handbook, we do not directly look at finance-related issues when inspecting a provider. Issues such as this [Bournville] are a matter for the funding bodies and, where relevant, the FE Commissioner. Both Ofsted and the commissioner, together, play a vital role in helping to raise standards and outcomes for learners in the FE sector."

Mr Vasse added the college had begun to make savings, and was "on course to generate an end-of-year surplus by 2015/16".

The John Leggott notice was issued on November 7, but only made public on November 24. No other sixth form college is currently under a financial notice to improve from the EFA.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "The funding is sufficient for each full-time student to undertake a full timetable of courses to suit their needs, be it A-levels or other post-16 qualifications. It is for individual institutions to decide on what they provide to best suit the needs of their students."

COMMENTS

24 MPs back £10 wage motion
No concept of reality! Of course £10 per hour would put employers off.

Why would they take on someone who takes up a lot of their time to train for £10 per hour when they can take on someone with relevant experience for less?

In addition, employers will already be paying for training next year.

Ann Marie

Let's not forget that employers don't just pay the NMW for Apprentices but will also be paying mandatory cash contributions when the new funding arrangements come into play.

Auto-enrolment for pensions are also starting to take effect on smaller businesses and other business costs continue to rise. So rises in the NMW in labour intensive, low pay industries, such as hairdressing, have a big impact

on business viability and therefore on employment.

Let's leave the LPC to get on with their job, free from political pressure.

Hilary Hall

Commissioner in FE funding support call
So what Dr Collins is saying is that he wants these Maths and English Skills developed by colleges to be Functional? Because I think we may have the answer to that little problem already...

Steve Hewitt

Pragmatism not evangelism needed on shift to digital
I think to describe the Feltag light as fading is a gross misrepresentation of the reality in the majority of FE providers. The 35 Feltag recommendations and the Govt response are predicated on

pragmatism not evangelism.

The Feltag momentum is increasing not fading.

Bob Harrison

Commissioner on collision course with Ofsted
Well done to the commissioner. Whole areas of the public sector are losing confidence in Ofsted.

Its current approach of monitoring and improving quality needs a complete rethink.

Why can't providers return business and quality critical information digitally and more frequently and then be randomly audited on the validity of what they return?

Why can't each governing body have a member whose role it is to report directly to an 'Ofsted-like' agency?

Reader

NEWS

Ex-FE chief Dr Pember picks up on commissioner advice

FE WEEK REPORTER
NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Much has been made of the first annual report of FE Commissioner Dr David Collins.

He warned colleges against dropping expensive subjects, such as science and engineering, in straitened times for the sector.

But Dr Collins also laid out his findings, based on his visits to 11 colleges, on board chairs, governors, principals and clerks.

Dr Sue Pember (pictured), former head of FE and skills investment at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, looks deeper at these issues and offers advice.

"Although Dr Collins's annual report only covers 6 per cent of the sector, it needs to be read by all of us in FE," she told *FE Week*.

"It rightly draws attention to issues around governance, including the role of the clerk, and they accord with the recommendations in the Association of Colleges' Governors' Council-led Creating Excellence in Governance.

"It is really important for governors working with their senior leadership team to be clear on what each is there to do.

"Boards must be given the tools to govern and they will find that job difficult without senior staff help.

"Roles need to be clear and written down and to support this understanding the new draft code of governance which will come out for consultation soon will make address a number of these issues."



The principal

The principal must be responsible for the executive management of the college and its day-to-day direction. S/he should not seek to determine matters reserved for the governing

board but should ensure the board business runs smoothly by providing timely advice. The specific responsibilities of the principal in relation to board business must include:

- ensuring that board decisions are implemented through the college's management structure; advising the board as required; and as the 'accountable officer', informing the board if any actions would be incompatible with the financial memorandum. If the governing body nevertheless decides to proceed, then the principal must inform the chief executive of the relevant funding body

- responsible for prompt and coherent management reports to governors, including the emergence of major new risks and opportunities; and for facilitating appropriate opportunities for governors to see the college's front-line activities and meet staff at all levels.

The chair

- is responsible for the leadership of the board and ultimately to the stakeholders for its effectiveness

- should take particular care that the board observes the values of college governance

- as a non-executive, should not be drawn into day-to-day management but should be able to challenge

- should promote effective and efficient operation of the board, ensuring that members work together effectively

- should ensure there is effective communication between the board and all its stakeholders, both internal and external

- is responsible for setting the agenda of the board, ensuring that adequate time is available for discussion of agenda items, particularly strategic items, and promoting a culture of openness and debate, facilitating the contribution of all members

- supported by the clerk, should ensure the necessary resources and opportunities are provided for developing and updating the knowledge and capabilities of governors both individually and collectively

- working with the clerk, principal and SLT should ensure governors receive timely papers and information in a form that facilitates their understanding and participation in the discussion.

The clerk

The board must safeguard the clerk's ability to carry out his/her responsibilities and ensure the clerk has adequate time and available resources so that the clerk is able to:

- be solely responsible to the board and have a direct reporting link to its chair for the conduct of board business

- inform the board if s/he believes that any proposed action would exceed its powers or be contrary to legislation or the financial memorandum

- work closely with the chair and principal to advance business, keeping the principal fully informed on any matter relating to board business. If this is not possible because of inappropriate conduct by one of the parties involved, the board must take action.

Individual governors

- should be committed and contribute proactively to meetings, and be seen as college advocates. They should bring knowledge and expertise to the table and support and challenge the executive by ensuring student interest is first

- should be aware of the status and role of the corporation as an exempt charity and the status of the governors as charity

- should act with honesty, frankness and objectivity, taking decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias

- are responsible for identifying gaps in their individual skills and knowledge and undertaking further training and development as appropriate.

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Ofsted's new CIF plans under

MIKE COOPER & COLIN FORREST
NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Reading the preamble to Ofsted's Better inspection for all consultation suggests a degree of reflection from Chief Inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw — not only the title, but the narrative and rhetoric.

He hints at three main weaknesses (or 'areas for improvement'?) in the inspection methodology that need addressing: consistency, better inspector training and more practitioners becoming involved as inspectors.

The consultation's questions cover quite different areas, though. They mainly relate to developing a common inspection framework (CIF) — across maintained schools, academies, FE and skills, early years settings and some independent schools. Given that disparity, here are some ideas about those three issues from Sir Michael.

Consistency

At first glance, this new approach could potentially enhance consistency to a degree. It's been welcomed as providing more equitable comparisons between, say, school sixth forms and sixth form or GFE colleges.

However, critics of a lack of consistency in inspection haven't focussed on the framework's validity as an evaluation tool, so much as its application — and the resulting reliability of inspectors' judgements.

Our research and discussions with providers have uncovered a feeling that Ofsted may have ended the contracts with CfBT, Serco and Tribal because, in part, they played a significant role in perceptions among providers of an 'element of luck' in inspections.

Sir Michael will therefore take this aspect back in-house, reportedly to improve consistency. The consultation's Q11 focuses specifically on reliability of judgements and evidence-gathering, suggesting that this is a concern for Ofsted.

Is this really where the problem lies, though?

Perhaps the reductionist nature of the inspection process is the real heart of the consistency issue. Ultimately, just one of four broad grades is used — although talk of, for example, a "strong grade two" often pervades inspections, somewhat hedging Ofsted's bets.

The brave statement that inspectors will use "all the available evidence" to arrive at judgements appears in the consultation, alongside a restatement of the current grading headings.

But the complexity of what is under scrutiny isn't amenable to such simplistic categorisation. Moreover, how any valid intelligence and lessons from provider complaints are used to improve the reliability of inspection judgements is not clear. The number of complaints, and the fact that very few are upheld, are both made public. Yet little information is available about the nature of the complaints, the significance of any resulting changes and how all of that informs improvements to inspection.

Although some complaints will come from



Clockwise from above: Ofsted chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw, Colin Forrest and Mike Cooper, both from the Policy Consortium — policyconsortium.co.uk. Pictured opposite: Ofsted's Aviation House London HQ

providers who are essentially 'in denial' of bad news, others may have some degree of merit — and a few are sufficient to warrant being upheld. Those final two categories contain food for thought and action by Ofsted.

Shouldn't the reflective development of a standard framework across most of the education system incorporate a proper analysis of the 'free consultancy' that complaints provide? After all, the complaints procedure is itself already generic across Ofsted.

There's also the issue that, if providers from the FE sector (or indeed, elsewhere) do not feel a revised 'universal' CIF is appropriate for inspecting their work, then complaints

about the inappropriateness of judgements made using it will increase.

Ofsted has re-engaged with improvement for some time; it asks for advice on how it inspects. The consultation's introduction indicates that future inspections will encourage "professional dialogue about the key issues, strengths and weaknesses that are most relevant to the individual school or further education and skills provider".

In some settings, linking Ofsted to weaker providers has been welcomed — as have proposals envisaging more frequent inspections for good or outstanding providers.

Equating inspections with 'professional dialogue', while coupling them with the re-

introduction of the word 'weaknesses' is a somewhat piquant idea, however.

A consultation question 'that might have been', here, would run: "How can providers work more closely and effectively with Ofsted to ensure the best degree of consistency and reliability in its judgements, while also maintaining proper independence and rigour?"

Better-trained inspectors

Ofsted already has a significant and demanding training programme for inspectors, whether full-time or part-time. To suggest more may be impractical and possibly even counter-productive. But better

three-point inspection



of judgements can be enhanced through analysing qualitative data, too.

A missing question from the consultation in this field would be “How could providers help Ofsted improve its training of inspectors, without unduly increasing the burdens of such preparation?”

More practitioners as inspectors

Some of the harshest criticisms of inspection involve the credibility of highly-influential judgements from inspectors who may be far removed from the sector, the key matters under consideration (like teaching and learning, or the subjects, settings and courses involved), and from the genuine realities of provision.

One apparent solution lies in having a greater slice of inspection activity undertaken by current practitioners. It seems an obvious answer, with considerable benefits for

all those involved.

However, the disadvantages are not as well appreciated. For instance, assumptions arising from being immersed in daily practice for one kind of provision can prove more difficult to put aside in a different inspection context than it is for someone who is otherwise more remote.

A good example might be the highly-contested territory of graded or ungraded lesson observations, where views are strongly-held on either side.

Being a practitioner doesn’t automatically guarantee the skill-set to be an inspector, too — although Ofsted’s recruitment processes can make such distinctions. Some might, however, argue that they haven’t always succeeded, to date.

Relating the practical demands of inspection schedules to inspector supply may still produce anomalies. And if an associate inspector works at a provider that drops to ‘Requires Improvement’ or ‘Inadequate’, then he/she is barred from undertaking inspections until that grade improves.

All this has a potential impact on the supply of inspectors and their deployment.

More sheer practicalities add to reservations around the good idea of engaging more current sector staff as inspectors. Ofsted’s training and accreditation regime, and its inspection and reporting processes, are all famously demanding — and rightly so.

Yet so too is the day-job; and as most would agree, increasingly so.

Whatever the potential advantages, providers may think twice about their staff becoming associate inspectors, and a commitment to release for a set minimum number of inspections.

This is particularly so when — as one rightly hopes with potential inspectors — they are high-performing ‘assets’. Similarly, even ambitious and able full-time staff may feel that taking on an inspection role would prove one extra burden too far.

Availability at short notice is a further key challenge: for Ofsted, for providers employing would-be part-time inspectors, and for those practitioners themselves.

Although Ofsted’s confidential scheduling is not normally short-notice itself, the realities suggest that there may well be a growing stream of urgent late calls for associate inspectors to fill gaps.

So, improving inspection through increasing current practitioners has clear attractions — but that involves significant risks, too.

Here, the consultation might have asked “How can Ofsted make better use of the sector practitioners’ current experience and ability in inspections, without unrealistic demands on the organisations and individuals involved?”

Will “better inspection” actually produce improved provision for all?

Sir Michael was quite right to highlight those three topics in his preamble. Why those issues did not feature significantly in the consultation is puzzling — not least because arguably, they matter at least as much as the structural discussion about a universal framework regarding the key, ultimate function of inspection: improvement.

Any change in inspection must aim at achieving more effective, speedy and reliable impact on learners’ experience and outcomes. The process also needs to become more transparent, adding to the potential for co-ownership, between providers and the inspectorate, of improvement.

Some time ago, the Skills Commission called for an evaluation of Ofsted’s role in improvement. Nothing in this consultation hints at reviewing this crucial — perhaps uncomfortable — aspect of its work. Yet it refers to the inspectorate ‘evolving’. Few, if any, students of Darwin would recognise that as an appropriate description of the proposed changes.

If the right consultation questions aren’t being asked now, then how and from where will improvement come?

Deadline approaches

Ofsted’s Better inspection for all consultation opened on October 9 and closes on Friday (December 5). Visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/futureofinspection to take part.

UKCES report branded ‘disappointing’ for missing out indies

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A report from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) which warned workforce skills and skills provision must be increased to boost productivity, wages and social mobility has been branded “disappointing” by the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP).

The report, *Growth through people*, published on Monday (November 24), outlined five priorities for action over the next 20 years, including giving employers leadership in the skills and apprenticeship system, measuring job outcomes as success not just qualifications, increasing workplace productivity, more opportunities to earn and learn, and stronger links between employers and education.

A spokesperson for AELP said it welcomed the report’s “focus on skills as a key driver of sustainable economic recovery” and its calls for closer working between employers and training providers of all types.

“However it is disappointing that the paper says ‘FE colleges should be supported to work with employers’,” he said.

“This institutional view of the sector does not reflect that the best provision of technical skills often involves partnerships between employers, colleges and independent training providers.”

Stewart Segal, AELP chief executive, added: “The partnership approach to skills with employers having the choice to work with training providers of all types is the only way forward.”

But, he added: “There is much in the UKCES report that we can support. The focus on employer engagement, the role of skills in driving productivity and the focus on earning and learning are all approaches AELP has promoted over many years.

“We need to drive the apprenticeship programme and we need a period of long term stability not fundamental change proposed by the government.”

And Mr Segal warned “employer leadership” should not necessarily mean complete control over funding. “Employers want to retain the choice of direct funding or working with their chosen training provider and we should retain this option in the system,” he said.

David Hughes, chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, described the report as “important” — pointing to a “perfect storm” of widening skills gaps, high unemployment an aging population and a reduction in employer investment in training over the last five years. “There are solutions to this. The UKCES itself is a good start in establishing the national and local partnership approach between Government, employers, providers and workers,” he said.

Martin Doel, chief executive of the Association of Colleges, said: “Employers must work together with the education community to create meaningful qualifications for today’s fast-changing global skills economy.”

PROFILE



I have a motto
— don't let not
knowing how
to do something
stop you from
doing it



TO HULL AND BACK

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The art of being the boss hasn't come naturally to Hull College principal Graham Towse.

"My first experience of management was a disaster to be honest," he admits.

In 1995, having progressed to engineer at De-Smet Rosedowns Ltd, the company where he began an apprenticeship 10 years earlier at the age of 16, Towse moved upwards on the career ladder.

"And I hated it," he says with a laugh.

"I remember saying to my wife, 'I think I've hit my ceiling — I'm never going to be a manager, that's not how I am'."

But he says management skills can be learned — something that happened when he moved into FE teaching for the first time the following year.

"I sort of accidentally fell into FE," he says.

His company had wanted him to move to India, but with two small daughters, Amy, now 23 and Anna, now 21, Towse declined the

offer and instead accepted a tutoring role at Hull College.

"And I learned about management that way — through a range of different roles, from managing students to having 60 staff underneath me as head of engineering and being a deputy at Bishop Burton and Grimsby Colleges," he says.

"Engineers are difficult people to manage — and I learned a lot.

"I learned tons of stuff around leadership and management and the difference between the two.

"Training courses and textbooks will give you the theory, but the application of it you learn through mistakes.

"There's a lot of us as managers and leaders in FE who are quite transactional, process-driven, quite hard, and trying to balance that with the emotional side of it is a skill which I think can be learned, but it's a very difficult one to learn."

But Towse has always had a rocky relationship with learning.

"I did terribly at school — awful," he says.

"I just pratted about to be honest. I just wasn't interested.

"I sort of fancied going to sea, joining either the Royal or the Merchant Navy, so I went to Trinity House — a nautical college, the only one in the UK — and got to wear the sailor's outfit and all of that.

"While I was there, I did GCSE engineering, and I sort of quite liked it, the practical side of things, but failed the exam abysmally.

"I've never been academic. Okay, now I've managed to get a master's degree, but it was hard work. Nothing ever came easy to me."

However, he's philosophical about his journey.

"In some ways, it turned out all right, because if I had applied myself, things might have been totally different — I may have gone in a different direction, who knows?," he says.

As it was, at 16 Towse realised the sea wasn't for him, and decided "to stay with his roots" and his then-girlfriend, now wife, Sharon, in Hull.

He started his engineering apprenticeship, which at the time entailed a year of

classroom-based learning before entering the workplace, at Hull College. This presented its own challenges.

"It's changed now, but back then a young apprentice engineer took a lot of stick," he says. "Nowadays, some of the things they did to us would be illegal. They'd hold you upside down, tie you to an engine hoist, hoist you up and leave you hanging.

"But you get used to it, and it was part and parcel of being an apprentice back then — that's just how it was and it was accepted in the trade. Obviously it has changed significantly now."

At 18 he married Sharon, then an apprentice with the council, and the couple bought a house.

He finished his apprenticeship and continued to work for the same company, who also put him through an engineering degree with the University of Humberside, before making the move into FE.

"I didn't know how to be a teacher," he says.

"I started August 27, 1996, and started



It's a personal thing

What is your favourite book, and why?
I'll read anything. The book that really got me into management thinking was The Goal by Eliyahu M Goldratt. But when I pick up Dan Brown and Lee Child books I can't put them down

What is your pet hate?
Those that lack ambition for themselves and their organisation and those that do not take responsibility and instead look for others to blame or criticise. One my previous bosses always used to say: "Look in the mirror before you look out of the window"

What do you do to switch off after work?
I like to read when I can. I'm quite handy at most practical things and I like gardening and DIY too. My wife and I have totally remodelled our house by ourselves over the years

If you could invite anyone, living or dead, to a dinner party who would it be?
I'm not bad at music trivia, so I'd invite the crew from Never Mind the Buzzcocks for a fun night with a curry and a few beers

What did you want to be when you were growing up?
I never really had a plan as to what I wanted to be. I fancied the Navy for a bit. I had a working class upbringing where you were expected to enter a trade, which I did. I am of course now in my dream job as principal of the college in my home city which saved me after I didn't do well at school

Towse, aged 17, using a lathe as an apprentice engineer



Towse (right) with his family. From left: wife Sharon and daughters Anna and Amy

teaching September 3 — six days and I was in front of a class, with no material.

“And you learn, and you get on with it, and I think that’s what it’s like in life. And that’s what keeps it all interesting for me.

“I have a motto — don’t let not knowing how to do something stop you from doing it.”

Towse’s softly-spoken Yorkshire accent stops this from sounding arrogant — and it’s clearly not meant that way.

“People or students say to me: ‘I can’t do that, I don’t know how to do it’,” he says.

“Well, sorry, have a go at it anyway and do it.”

After a decade at Hull, he had risen to become director of 14 to 19 provision, when a deputy principal role opened up at the nearby land-based Bishop Burton College.

“I was looking for the next step and there wasn’t really an opportunity at Hull to progress,” says Towse.

“It was something totally different too — that college is very commercially active. It’s got its own farm, you’re dealing with pigs and horses and I’ve never had anything to do with

animals before.

“I learned loads from the principal, Jeanette Dawson. I think we clicked. She was kicking my backside every day, don’t get me wrong, but she could get on with what she needed to and she trusted me to get on with stuff.”

After four years there, Towse got “itchy feet” and applied for a deputy role at the Grimsby Institute, which was still reeling from an abrupt change in leadership.

“They had gone through a rocky road at Grimsby,” says Towse.

“The new principal, Sue Middlehurst, and I worked really well together and we transformed the college.”

Towse had planned to stay at Grimsby, and was being groomed to take over the role of principal when Middlehurst retired — but the principalship at Hull College came up.

“For me it was a no-brainer,” says Towse. “It’s the college that actually saved me, because I’d left school with nothing. I think I got three O-levels at grade C, and did my apprenticeship and day release there, I

did my HNC.”

But in going back, he says, “the loop was closed”.

“That was 18 months ago now, and it’s been brilliant,” he says.

The 28,000 learner college, currently rated outstanding by Ofsted, was among the first to directly recruit 14-year-olds last year, with an initial cohort of 200 — the largest in the country.

“That’s a real challenge for us because we’re sort of leading the way on it,” he says.

“Nobody has really done it before, so we’re picking up all sorts of things along the way that we perhaps didn’t think about when we first set out, but I hope that that really gets going in a bigger way.”

He adds: “It’s an interesting time in FE at the moment. Obviously, there are funding challenges, but everyone has that, but the study programmes, maths and English are a big issue in Hull.

“More than 70 per cent of the young people that come to us have less than a grade C in maths and English and that’s typical of a large

FE college in a deprived area.”

Telling young people who have had bad experiences at school that they have to take maths and English is a struggle he says, and isn’t helped by the emphasis on GCSEs.

“Functional Skills are much better, students are able to contextualise and understand how to apply it to the trade they’re studying,” he says.

“I think if we lose them, we lose them at our peril, and getting it back again will be very difficult.”

But being the principal of the college you attended, has added benefits for dealing with unwilling students.

“Because I’ve been there and done it, through FE, you get a bit of respect,” he says.

Indeed, a picture of Towse using a lathe as a 17-year-old apprentice hangs in his office.

“What you get from young people sometimes is: ‘You don’t know, you’ve never done this...’” he says.

“And I can point to the picture, say to them, ‘Actually, yes I have...’ and that’s been really powerful.”



FE INSIDER

Stratford-upon-Avon College director of marketing, communications and admissions, and former 157 Group policy and communications officer, Gemma Knott writes the exclusive FE Insider column for *FE Week* on the first Monday of every month

Making a job out of careers education

It's been a particularly busy month in FE with the combination of the Skills Show and the Association of Colleges annual conference, and if you're working in marketing, very very busy.

We also had school recruitment fairs and stands at the Ricoh Arena's careers event.

And if our presence at these events has taught me one thing it's that children still like pens and badges.

It was a fantastic experience to engage with so many young people at the Skills Show and yet I did think we were missing a trick in influencing a generation.

So many primary schoolchildren were running around grabbing as many badges, sweets and pens that they could squeeze into their freebie bags and I did not feel like they had been briefed by their teachers as to what the Skills Show was all about.

Employers should want to engage proactively with young people to inspire, empower and influence

Do not get me wrong this is not a criticism of the Skills Show — it was an impressive display of providers putting on interactive and meaningful activities for young people to engage with.

It is more an observation that from a young age we have got to get better at educating young people on what they could do and become.

But whose job is this? Teachers have enough to do and I cannot help but think this showed at the Skills Show. Those teachers

who escorted their pupils in the large seemed to provide little focus as to the outcomes of the day.

By the time a group of primary schoolchildren reached our stand and we had asked what they all wanted to be when they were older, they all chimed in perfect harmony "badge makers".

But it's not easy delivering exciting and compelling careers education to young people and even more of a task when you get to secondary school where all advice and guidance can easily take a competitive slant.

So what can we do? At a local level we should be inviting our schoolchildren into college and engaging with them as early as possible to show them what their brothers and sisters are up to.

We should definitely be adding focus to activities outside and inside school, for example making sure that there are schemes of work which piece together interests in future occupations and jobs; it would have saved me a fortune in pens and badges if the visitors had been given tasks for the day.

We should be placing more responsibility on employers to engage with young people as the pipeline of their workforce into the future. Employers should want to engage proactively with young people to inspire, empower and influence.

And the National Careers Service needs to be far more proactive in engaging with young people and seen as a service which is readily available to use. At the moment it's a bit of an enigma.

Schools themselves need to buy in help if they cannot achieve delivery of impartial careers at the statutory level. And this is where colleges could help by delivering a function in partnership.

Staffing in schools, colleges and elsewhere needs to become highly professionalised where such a service is delivered: oh, the irony to make a job out of careers.

I myself am a product of luck — I received little to no careers education, worryingly even less effort was made at my university where I think investing tens of thousands of pounds deserves for you to receive care and attention on an individual level. And not everyone will get lucky, some will fall, some will find their feet but why leave it to chance?



GRAHAM TAYLOR

Principal of New College Swindon

Financial security or Ofsted outstanding, or both?

Bournville College leadership got a glowing grade one from Ofsted before the FE Commissioner Dr David Collins was sent in to sort out the finances. He later said the education watchdog could "be more useful" on college financial matters and Graham Taylor considers who's got it right.

In the Ofsted versus FE Commissioner Rumble in the Jungle, who wins? It's a no-brainer — Dr Collins.

How can you possibly be awarded a grade one for leadership and management and be bordering upon insolvent at the same time?

Ofsted needs to rethink its evaluation criteria for FE. It pays little attention to financial indicators or customer growth and rarely (if ever) comments on it. So it's possible to get a high grade when you are approaching bust and/or your learner numbers are falling.

Ofsted supposedly promotes value for money within the common inspection framework (CIF) principles of inspection and regulation, but it doesn't report on it.

If it did, the 1,180 school sixth forms with fewer than 100 learners would be in trouble. Three quarters of the University Technical Colleges, free schools and studio schools are funded for fewer than 100 16 to 18-year-olds in 2014/15. And the taxpayer paid for 100 per cent of the capital funds to build these gleaming and underutilised edifices.

It's a minor miracle if FE sector managers make a modest surplus to reinvest in improving teaching and learning. Only 43 per cent of colleges managed a trading surplus last year and just 26 have been 'financially outstanding' for the last three years.

You should get a grade one (and a gold medal) for this and good success rates and not because of lesson observation judgements — subjective by definition and outmoded for e-learning and work-based assessment methods.

So the next Ofsted CIF (it seems to rewrite them every three years) should include for FE, a financial measure; a learner FTE measure — is the provider attracting learners (you'd be surprised how many providers with good or outstanding grades are losing business/learners?); and a rethink of how e-learning and workplace learning (usually assessment-based) are measured.

If we follow the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group path then classroom work will be a minority sport. Ofsted needs to get IT and get social media savvy. Sitting in classrooms trying to figure out if learning is taking place while students watch an inspirational TED lecture is a tough

call.

Moons ago we used to receive inspection reports on why colleges fail and how colleges succeed.

We could do with these reminders rather than the bland reports which we read now. If they "support and promote improvement" they need to get the KPIs right — customers and finance come first — the rest follows.

And getting finance right will be even more critical in FE. The sector and Government is sleep-walking into a financial crisis and I guess Dr Collins will be calling on a few FE colleges struggling to make ends meet. But there are two solutions.

The sector and Government is sleep-walking into a financial crisis and I guess Dr Collins will be calling on a few FE colleges struggling to make ends meet

First, unprotect the schools budget to ease the pain.

Government is only halfway to clearing the eyewatering deficit so cuts will continue. Whoever's in power next May should unprotect the schools budget so that cuts are spread more evenly. Whatever pressures schools are under they're not financial. It would be "fairer" (an oft used political word) to cut schools more — they are, after all, funded 22 per cent more per pupil than we are. At present the protected schools budget makes up 80 per cent of educational spend. No wonder the unprotected 16 to 18 bit gets such a disproportionate bashing.

And secondly, give us more freedom to spend the (reducing) funds.

In 2010, the Government promised "less money but more freedom". Given the dire state of the economy the sector bought into that. So we've had 35 per cent cuts in adult funding, 8 per cent in 16 to 18 but with less freedom.

We used to be able to vire between qualification aims and age groups. Now we have to pursue apprenticeships (*12,000 other qualifications are available) and loan funding. Please restore this ability to vire and follow customer demand.

Overarching FE and skills bodies have been looking at the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (Feltag) report and come up with provider-level advice, explains Nigel Ecclesfield.

Feltag has been the subject of much discussion, not least at the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Niace) and Association of Colleges (AoC) conferences last month.

But, for all our individual thoughts, tweets, and conversations, the issues raised are bigger than any one organisation.

“Ownership by the FE sector of Feltag’s recommendations is key,” read the report recommendations — work together and collaborate was the message.

Staff, managers and students have told us they want more support for digital skills across a wide range of roles

And that’s what we’re aiming to do. At Jisc, we have already convened a forum of what reads like a who’s who of FE bodies, to co-ordinate responses and join our planning.

That group includes AoC, NIACE, Association of Employment and Learning



NIGEL ECCLESFIELD

Head of change implementation support programmes — FE and skills, Jisc

Facing the Feltag challenge together

Providers (AELP), 157 Group, HOLEX, the Gazelle Group, The Association of National Specialist Colleges (Natspec), Institute of Education, Ofsted, Association for Learning Technology (ALT), Tinder Foundation, Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) and the Education and Training Foundation (ETF).

Also involved are the government’s Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

These organisations cover all aspects of our sector — from the largest colleges to small independent providers — so they are the public voice of FE.

Working individually, these bodies represent their members and will continue to, but on this occasion they combined their knowledge and their experience in working on technology-related projects to provide a comprehensive overview of sector needs.

They also identified solutions to respond to Feltag’s recommendations.

In the first meeting in October this group identified six priorities for action on Feltag. Improving communication with funders was a clear priority, and we anticipate that this

forum will help join the dots between what’s happening on the ground, and the sector’s strategic bodies.

But it’s not only collaboration between sector bodies that’s vital to meeting the recommendations. To achieve this shared vision individual providers also need to come together as one. We have outlined some key priorities where we think they could play a role.

Firstly, focus on the people. Feltag highlighted the need to share good practice and innovation through effective collaboration and networking, and to focus on people to make best use of technology.

To this end we have been consulting with thousands of individuals as part of our new co-design approach to innovation to understand what providers need. Staff, managers and students have told us they want more support for digital skills across a wide range of roles, and that’s what we’re doing; developing tools and guidance with our co-design partners, providers, learners and employers.

For example, for the ETF, Coralesce is developing a self-assessment tool to help

diagnose skills gaps, with Jisc working to support the use of this new technology.

Staff-student partnerships are also a great way of boosting digital skills, so together we will be providing plenty of support for learner-led and learner-focused innovation and training.

Secondly, look for opportunities to support cross-provider communication.

The report argued that to overcome barriers to learner access, what’s needed is more effective sharing of content across providers. As an example, we know digital simulations can lead to improved learner outcomes; those who have success in using simulations for learning need to be able share their experiences to support others who may be interested in implementing these technologies.

To support access Feltag suggested the use of social media channels by providers. These should promote inclusion, offer advice and provide safe environments for their users, to create a platform for dissemination of best practice across various organisations.

Thirdly, seek opportunities for shared services. The joint provision of services for colleges and the skills sector are becoming increasingly recognised as a means of creating some of the efficiencies heralded by the Feltag report. A number of providers are already working together to share back-office management services, for example the FE Sussex consortium of colleges.

No organisation acts alone. If we all join in with our response to Feltag and to the new demands that teaching in the 21st Century is placing on us, we will be stronger and more influential together.



DAME RUTH SILVER

Co-chair of the Skills Commission and president of the Further Education Trust for Leadership

Still in tune? The skills system and the changing structures of work

Dame Ruth Silver explains the origins of the latest Skills Commission report, which raises several ‘strategic alerts’ for the skills system and calls for more ‘systems thinking’ to ensure provision remains relevant and related to a rapidly changing world.

Skills Commission reports have always attempted to be ‘scripts for the future’ for sector leaders, policy makers and politicians to draw on, and our most recent contribution is no exception.

The ideas behind this inquiry had been a long time coming. While our other recent reports One System, Many Pathways, The Move to Improve (one and two), and Specialisation had focused on various reforms, institutions, and aspects of education and training, the commission recognised that wider societal changes were taking place that required fresh thinking and a wider lens.

Taking a step back and examining the system in its entirety from the perspective of ‘changing work’ presented itself as

a worthwhile, much needed enterprise, particularly at a time of public austerity and significant changes to the funding of skills provision, and its positioning in relation to the labour market.

The enthusiasm from the commission as we ‘entered the looking glass’, so to speak, and heard from leading labour market economists, journalists and academics, was hugely encouraging.

As we analysed the changing shape of the economy and new labour markets, examined occupation change, learned about emerging business structures, rates of training, the rise of flexible working patterns, and significant demographic and cultural changes, not only did we confirm the validity of our line of enquiry, we came to realise that the challenges facing the skills system were perhaps greater than we had imagined.

How does the system, for example, respond to training and progression opportunities in a flexible and polarised labour market, the reduction in structured entry routes into work for young people, the extension of working life, rapid technological innovation,

and continuing disparities in outcome based on social class or gender?

These implications and the others highlighted in the report pose serious questions to all parts of the system and our assessment of the system’s components against these concerns prompted us to flag four ‘strategic alerts’ that require urgent attention.

Strategic alert one was uncertainty around the responsibility for training in an increasingly flexible labour market. Number two was declining social mobility owing to a reduction in the alignment of skills provision to work. Three was fragmentation in the system making it difficult for employers to engage. And four was alarming policy dissonance between different Central Government departments.

The alerts reflected points that were repeatedly raised by contributors to the inquiry but beyond these our discussions with providers, representative bodies, and employers raised a whole host of other issues which require more nuanced considerations. For example, we encountered tensions within the apprenticeship model between those who want a focus on delivering the high level skills required by industry and the professions, and others who wish the model to expand rapidly to restore our broken youth labour market.

Other recurring themes of the inquiry were around the possibilities ‘personal learning’ accounts could offer in an age that will require continual reskilling, the frustrations caused by seemingly arbitrary age restrictions on funding, uncertainty around

structures of oversight, and the problems caused by funding systems not sufficiently flexible enough to respond to labour market intelligence.

Our repeated habit of constructing today’s solutions to fit yesterday’s problems is leaving a terrible inheritance for the next generation

These issues and the many others highlighted in the report require serious consideration from policy makers and new solutions. Our repeated habit of constructing today’s solutions to fit yesterday’s problems is — in so many instances from the state of the property market to the environment — leaving a terrible inheritance for the next generation.

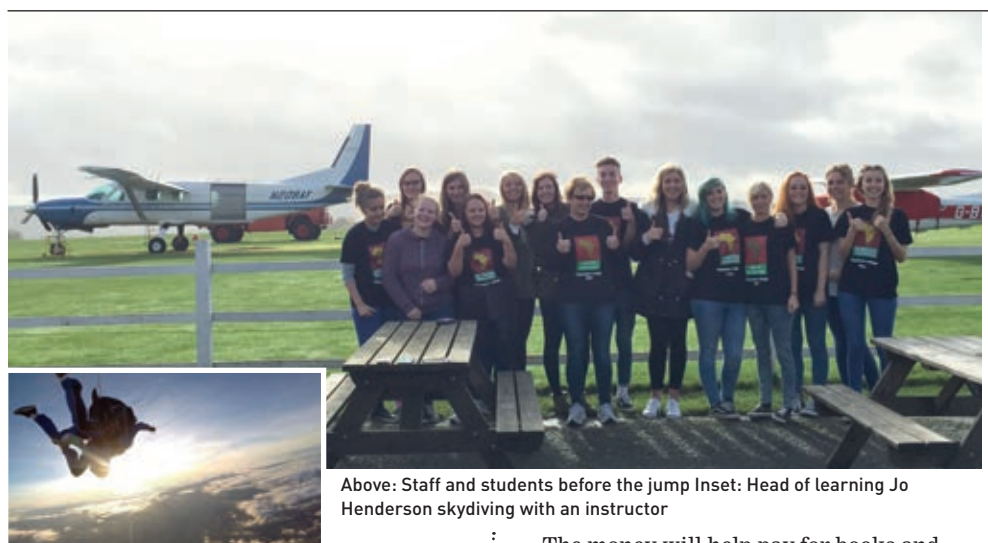
With a skills system that we found in parts to be seriously out of tune with the rapid and unplanned changes in work, it is the Skills Commission’s hope that all players in the system will take heed of the issues raised in the report and join us in finding ways to create sustainable solutions that will serve individuals well in a flexible and polarised labour market as well as businesses in a high-tech and globally competitive economy.

CAMPUS ROUND-UP

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Taking a dive for school children in Kenyan village



Above: Staff and students before the jump Inset: Head of learning Jo Henderson skydiving with an instructor

Hearts were racing as staff and students from Chichester College jumped from an aeroplane to raise funds for schoolchildren in Kenya.

A group of 23 people, including some partners of college members, were sponsored to jump with instructors at the Go Skydive centre in Salisbury.

More than £3,000 has so far been raised through this event and other fundraising activities that included running the 10-mile Great South Run through Southsea, Portsmouth, in fancy dress.

The money will help pay for books and uniforms that college learners will give to schoolchildren in the village of Nakuru, Kenya, during a trip there in April.

Charlie Copeland, health and social care lecturer, said: "We left college at 8am [for the skydive] and by 10am we were training how to land safely by landing on a bench. Staff and students went up in groups of six and started jumping just after lunch.

"After completing the jump some people were buzzing and wanted a career change, but others went green and, unfortunately, two were sick."

Learners clean 100-year-old bricks for new skills centre

Birmingham Metropolitan College students cleaned-up more than 6,000 bricks that will be used for its new skills centre.

Part of the college's original Erdington Skills Centre, which dated back to the early 20th century when the site was a technical school, was demolished to make way for a new £4m building.

More than 6,000 bricks were taken from the site to the college's James Watt Campus, in Birmingham, where level one brickwork students used heavy machinery to clean cement and grime from them.

They will be used for the new centre that will contain purpose-built classrooms and workshops for the construction trades.

Learner Francis Dean, aged 49, who is studying brickwork after being advised to register for the course by Jobcentre Plus, said: "It was great to see how the bricks would have originally looked after we had finished cleaning them.

"It's a good idea to re-use materials and



has been an interesting project to work on."

Assistant faculty director for construction Keith Acton said: "The bricks are probably around 100 years old. We were especially keen to recycle materials from the original building to keep some historical context."

Left: Learner Francis Dean. Above Inset: A computer-generated image showing how the new skills centre will look. Inset from Above: Francis and fellow learners Everal Brown and Muhammad Hameed on the brick cleaning machine

'Aha'mageddon on TV set after comedian tells learners to wreak havoc

Performing arts students from Croydon College acted alongside comedian Steve Coogan in his latest Alan Partridge series, writes Paul Offord.

It is not every day that students are encouraged to wreak havoc on the set of one of the nation's best-loved comedy shows.

But that was the basic instruction given to 19 performing arts learners from Croydon College when they starred in the second series of Alan Partridge: Mid-Morning Matters, set to be screened on Sky Atlantic in the new year.

They played unruly youngsters from a local comprehensive invited into the fictional North Norfolk Digital studio to talk to Mr Partridge, played by Steve Coogan, about their school's playing fields being sold off.

Level three learner Kellie Blair, aged 20, said: "We sat in Alan's little studio and were basically told to throw things at him while he tried to present his show. Some of the students then started shouting at him and we were all winding him up until a big argument broke out.



Steve Coogan in character as Alan Partridge with Croydon College learners

"The students with speaking parts probably only had about half an hour to learn their lines and the rest of us were given a basic idea what they wanted and left to improvise. Then Mr Coogan would ask us to do certain things slightly differently and we'd see how that went until everyone was happy with it."

Programme makers Baby Cow Productions approached Croydon College after Mr Coogan specifically asked for youngsters from outside of traditional stage schools to act in the episode.

The show's producer Ted Dowd, from Baby Cow, said: "Steve [Coogan] was keen not to have stage-school kids because they always

seem to have their natural instincts and realism sucked out of them."

Mr Dowd was full of praise for the college learners' good manners behind the scenes during filming on November 13.

He said: "It was so great to have them come up after and say thanks for letting them be involved. You don't expect that these days.

"Steve did a good job of directing them — without making them feel intimidated or self-conscious. It is always a fine line to tread... but he's an old pro. Steve had great fun and it worked a treat."

Level three learner Mark Choppin, 17, was one of six students who had speaking parts.

He said: "It really was such an amazing

opportunity. We learned so much in a short period of time about film acting and production. It will look impressive on my actor's CV."

James Miller, the college's programme leader for performing arts and production, said: "It was a fantastic and valuable experience for the students, who gained practical knowledge about acting and filming. It was also pretty special to think they were directed by Mr Coogan."

Kellie, who hopes to act on TV after graduating, said: "It was pretty surreal to be working with him [Mr Coogan], but I found it very inspiring for my future career. He was really nice. He seemed to care a lot that we were all happy with what we were doing during filming and was even nice enough to pose for photos with us afterwards."

She added: "It was good to see how they make a TV show like that and everyone was very professional. It's definitely something that I would like to go into one day."



A TV monitor on the set showing Mr Coogan with learners

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& MOVERS SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who's new and who's leaving

Barnfield College has announced that its new principal will be Tim Eyton-Jones. He is currently the principal of John Ruskin College, but is due to leave in March.

Mr Eyton-Jones leaves the sixth form college, in South Croydon, having joined in 2009 — the year before it was rated as inadequate by Ofsted. It was revisited by inspectors last year, who gave it an outstanding grade.

He said: "I am very sad to be leaving John Ruskin College as it is a truly outstanding organisation. I will miss the energy and professionalism of the staff and students and I want to wish them all success for the future. I would also like to thank everyone for the support I have had while in post."

A college spokesperson said: "The corporation would like to thank Mr Eyton-Jones for his hard work, commitment and inspirational leadership over the last five years."

Monica Box, Barnfield College interim principal, will remain in post until Mr

Eyton-Jones joins. She has previously led City College Manchester, South Kent College and more recently Kensington and Chelsea College, each in the capacity of interim principal.

She replaced previous interim principal Dame Jackie Fisher at the end of October. Dame Jackie's interim position was initially for six months, but at the request of the board she agreed to stay on for a further three months.

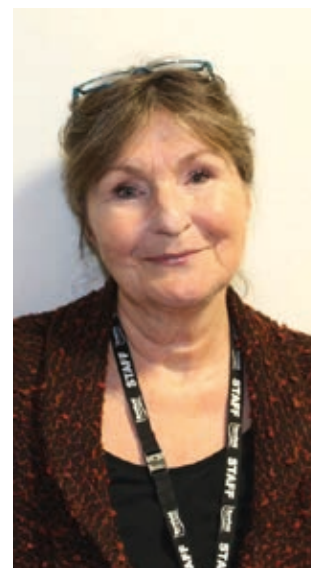
Governors' board chair Robin Somerville said: "I'm confident that under Mr Eyton-Jones's leadership Barnfield College will go from strength to strength, and he will finish the much needed transformation of the college started by Dame Jackie and continued by Ms Box in their interim capacities."

The recruitment process to replace Mr Eyton-Jones at John Ruskin is under way.

Meanwhile, the 157 Group has elected Sarah Robinson OBE, principal of Stoke-on-Trent College, to serve as chair for the next



Tim Eyton-Jones



Monica Box



Sarah Robinson

12 months.

She takes over from Peter Roberts, chief executive of Leeds City College, who has been chair since November 2012.

Ms Robinson said "I am delighted to be taking on the role of chair at an immensely important time for FE.

"As next year's general election approaches, the 157 Group's role in influencing policy will be vital to securing the best possible education and skills system for learners and employers."

She said she was "proud" of the 157 Group's work.

Ms Robinson added: "I pay tribute to

Peter Roberts, who has led the 157 Group so expertly for the last two years, and to my fellow members of the 157 Group, for their continued commitment to our work."

Dr Lynne Sedgmore CBE, executive director of the 157 Group, said, "Enhancing the lives of learners and improving the experience of employers is central to everything that colleges do — and Stoke-on-Trent College is an excellent example of that.

"I am therefore delighted that Sarah Robinson will be our chair for the coming year, and I look forward to working with her for the benefit of our education and skills system."

If you want to let us know of any new faces at the top of your college, training provider or awarding organisation please let us know by emailing news@feweek.co.uk


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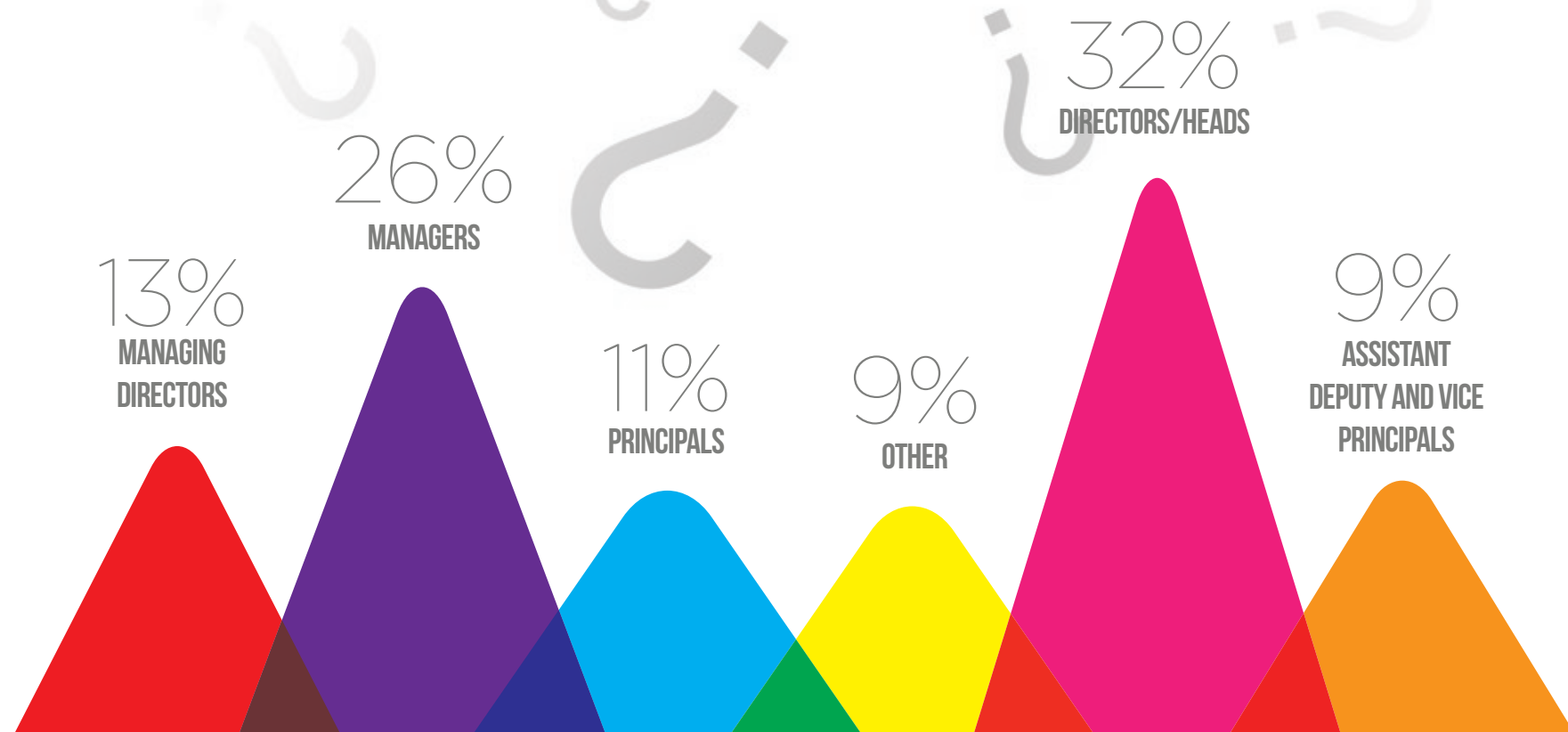
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The Skills Network, a leading training provider, is currently recruiting full and part-time flexible Functional Skills tutors, to support learners while they work to complete our blended learning Functional Skills/GCSE qualification in English and Maths.

ABOUT THE ROLE

As a Functional Skills tutor you will be responsible for providing face to face support to learners in half-day sessions at a local venue. Tutors will also provide remote/online subject specific support to learners, as well as providing encouragement and feedback with the assistance of Learner Support and Retention Advisors. You will be required to liaise with the Learner Support Advisors in our office, regarding support for learners and any areas of concern. Once appointed you will need to attend an induction/training day at a Mercia venue.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DO YOU NEED?

All applicants are expected to hold a relevant qualification in the following areas:

- A teaching qualification PTTLs/CTTLs/DTTLs/Cert Ed/PGCE or equivalent (or working towards)
- Level 3 in Maths and/or English
- Experience in supporting the delivery of functional skills in FE.

To apply for a role, please visit www.theskillsnetwork.com to download an application form and send your completed form to careers@theskillsnetwork.com

Job Opportunities

Part time Lecturers required

Functional Skills/GCSE Maths & English



Vocational Hourly Rate

£17.72 hourly paid (£22.48 including holiday pay)

Part Time Lecturers are appointed to a fixed term, variable hours contract

Overall purpose of job:

To deliver teaching, learning and assessment and contribute to the effectiveness and success of the working closely with Section Leaders, Course Co-ordinators and the Head of Sector. To undertake duties associated with planning, assessment, administration, managing learning environments and learning materials.

Shipley College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults and expects all staff to share this commitment. The College is actively committed to a policy of equality of opportunity for all through education and therefore encourages applications from all regardless of age, disability, economic status, gender, race, religion and beliefs or sexual orientation. Successful candidates will be required, where appropriate, to undergo a Disclosure and Barring service (DBS) Disclosure Check.

How to apply:

You can download an application pack from our College website www.shipley.ac.uk or alternatively to request an application pack, please contact: Shipley College, Human Resources on **01274 327249** or email jobs@shipley.ac.uk. Completed application forms should be returned to jobs@shipley.ac.uk or alternatively by post to **Human Resources, Shipley College, Salt Building, Victoria Road, Saltaire, BD18 3LQ.**

Closing date - Friday 12 December 14

Interview date - Wednesday 17 December

Start date - ASAP

Sunderland College

EXTERNAL VACANCY

Lecturer 2 (Maths Specialist)

Post Ref: 5722, 37 hours per week, Permanent.
£25,704 - £33,516 per annum (dependent on qualifications)
Part-time/Job share applications will also be considered

Sunderland College is looking to appoint a maths specialist who can demonstrate a commitment to outstanding teaching and learner achievement. We are seeking to appoint an inspirational classroom practitioner who can demonstrate maths curriculum development and innovative teaching, learning and assessment practices.

This post will afford the candidate an ideal opportunity to expand their teaching portfolio to include both 16-18 and 19+ learners and deliver a diverse maths curriculum ranging from Functional Skills to GCSE. If you are a teaching practitioner who displays energy, enthusiasm and a passion for your subject then we would welcome your application. As an organisation we fully understand the pivotal importance of teaching, learning and assessment to influence our continued growth in learner achievement and we are looking for teacher who can drive this initiative forward. The successful candidate will be an integral part of the maths team and there is scope to become a teaching and learning coach to professionally develop the maths curriculum further and support the maths delivery team.

Applicants should have an appropriate Degree or subject specialism in maths, teaching qualification and an assessors' award would be preferable. Within the personal statement, practical examples of how you fulfil the person specification and examples of your teaching practice should be included. Sunderland College welcomes applications from both newly qualified practitioners and more experienced staff.

Due to the nature of this post you will be required to undertake an Enhanced Disclosure Check. To find out more about this great opportunity visit sunderlandcollege.ac.uk/vacancies alternatively email vacancies@sunderlandcollege.ac.uk or call 0191 511 6046 to request an application pack.

All applications must be received by Monday 1st December 2014.

We are working towards equal opportunities and welcome applications from all sections of the community. We are committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.



Teacher Maths (FT & PT) £23,318 - £26,814 pro rata

Closing date: 9th December 2014

Interview date: 18th December 2014

#inspiringTALENT

**WEST
CHESHIRE
COLLEGE**

We are now seeking Maths Teachers to teach Maths up to Level 3 with students on full-time Vocational Programmes and also with adult learners in a range of community settings. An ability to teach GCSE and Functional Skills is essential: experience of teaching AS Maths would be advantageous. The main duties will be to prepare and deliver high quality teaching and learning activities, to mark and assess learners' work and to contribute to a lively and committed team.

Applicants will need to have a Level 4/5 Diploma in Maths and/or a Degree in Maths/or a related subject and a teaching qualification.

Each employee is required to undergo a Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check and must commit to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Should you wish to apply for this post, you need to complete the Application Form and the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form, which should be submitted either electronically to recruitment@west-cheshire.ac.uk, or by post to Organisational Development & HR, West Cheshire College, off Sutton Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 7BF by 12noon on **9th December 2014.**

If you are successful in the short-listing then you will be notified and called for interview on **18th December 2014.** Therefore please ensure you are available on that date; however please note that this may be subject to change.

For full application details please visit our website www.west-cheshire.ac.uk.

NOCN FLYING HIGH

NOCN has partnered with NATS, the UK's leading provider of air traffic control services to provide a suite of qualifications that help students obtain their student Air Traffic Controller licence.

Training includes theory and practical simulated experience relevant to the course and is for both European and international students.

These new qualifications will be a welcome addition to NOCN's growing portfolio of specialist and higher apprenticeship qualifications.

NOCN create and develop quality, flexible qualifications for organisations that offer education and training to their students, members or staff in areas such as: health and social care, housing, construction, security, facilities management, horticulture, hospitality, manufacturing and engineering.

Call **0114 227 0500**

Email **business-enquiries@nocn.org.uk**

Visit **www.nocn.org.uk**

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nocn
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES



NOCN IS ONE OF ONLY 21 ORGANISATIONS, AND THE ONLY AWARDING ORGANISATION, TO ACHIEVE LEVEL 3 IN LEADERS IN DIVERSITY PRESENTED BY THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR DIVERSITY



FE Week Sudoku challenge

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

5		6						4
	3				8			
	8		6	4	7		1	
		3					9	7
				9				
6	5					1		
	7		9	8	3		6	
			1				8	
1						7		3

Difficulty:
EASY

Last Week's solutions

9	2	6	7	8	1	3	4	5
7	4	1	5	3	9	8	2	6
3	8	5	2	6	4	7	1	9
8	3	7	4	1	5	9	6	2
1	6	4	9	2	3	5	7	8
5	9	2	6	7	8	1	3	4
2	7	3	8	5	6	4	9	1
4	1	8	3	9	2	6	5	7
6	5	9	1	4	7	2	8	3

Difficulty:
EASY

	1					6		
9		3	4					
2				5				
	4				7	3		5
	2			8			4	
7		6	5				1	
				9				6
					3	1		2
		9					3	

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next week

1	4	7	9	3	2	6	8	5
5	2	3	8	4	6	1	7	9
6	9	8	1	7	5	4	3	2
2	5	6	7	8	9	3	4	1
8	7	1	3	5	4	2	9	6
4	3	9	6	2	1	7	5	8
3	8	5	2	1	7	9	6	4
7	6	2	4	9	8	5	1	3
9	1	4	5	6	3	8	2	7

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Spot the difference
to WIN an FE Week mug!



Spot five differences. First correct entry wins an FE Week mug. Text your name and picture of your completed spot the difference to 07969 166 374.